

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 6280

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, NO
SUBJ: VISIT OF F-16 PROJECT MANAGER BG ABRAHAMSON

REF: OSLO 6212

1. NORWEGIAN MEDIA PICKED UP DECEMBER 6 COPENHAGEN PRESS REPORT ALLEG
ING

MAJOR F-16 COST OVER RUNS AND BEGAN RUNNING SERIES OF ARTICLES AND
COMMENTARY TO SAME EFFECT. (REFTEL.

2. MOD HAS PROVIDED INFORMATION TO PRESS IN EFFORT TO COUNTER
NEGATIVE REPORTS AND MISSION ENLISTED AID OF VISITING F-16
PROJECT MANAGER BG JAMES ABRAHAMSON (IN COUNTRY VIEWING FIGHTER
OPERATIONS AT NORTHERN NORWEGIAN AIRFIELDS) IN ATTEMPT TO
INJECT FACTUAL CONTENT INTO WHAT IS WARMING UP INTO POSSIBLE
POLITICAL DEBATE.

3. GENERAL ABRAHAMSON'S OBVIOUS EXPERTISE AND OPEN AND INTELLIGENT
TREATMENT OF SUBJECT DURING DECEMBER 7 INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVES
OF TWO OSLO DAILIES (SEE REFTEL) MADE POSITIVE IMPRESSION., PARTICULARLY
USEFUL WERE POINTS HE EMPHASIZED THAT:

-NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON THIRD COUNTRY SALES WOULD OBVIOUSLY
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BE RESPECTED (NORWAY'S ARMS EXPORT REGULATIONS PROHIBIT

SALES TO....COUNTRIES AT WAR OR THREATENED BY WAR")

--THE F-16 PROJECT IS SEPARATE FROM PURCHASE OF WEAPONS TO BE MOUNTED ON THE AIRCRAFT AND COSTS FOR THEM SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN PLANE COSTS.

--THE BASIC PRICE OF THE PLANES IN 1975 DOLLARS REMAINS UNCHANGED.

--INFLATION WILL INCREASE THE COST OF THE PLANE, BUT THAT IS BEYOND CONTROL OF PROJECT AND IS A FACTORY EVERY PARTNER WILL HAVE TO COPE WITH.

4. PRIME MINISTER NORDLI STATED TWO DAYS AFTER ABRAHAMSON INTERVIEW ON DECEMBER 9"...A RENEWAL OF OUR FIGHTER PLANES IS IMPERATIVE." WHILE THE NEWSPAPER VERDENES GANG ORDINARILY SUPPORTIVE OF STRONGER DEFENSE EFFORTS, SAID"PURCHASE OF THE CENTURY IS BECOMING PRICE INCREASE OF THE CENTURY."

5. COMMENT: WHILE GENERAL ABRAHAMSON'S MUCH APPRECIATED EFFORTS DID SUCCEED IN PUTTING SOME LIMITS ON RANGE OF HYPERBOLE, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT ISSUE OF F-16 COST WILL BE MAJOR SUBJECT IN UPCOMING STORTING SESSIONS. IN FACT, SOCIALIST LEFT REPRESENTATIVES INSCRIBED A QUESTION ON STORTING'S CALENDAR TO WHICH MOD HANSEN RESPONDED DECEMBER 10 SAYING GONW WOULD BE IN NO POSITION TO GIVE PRECISE COST DATA UNTIL FEBRUARY. DEBATE WILL LIKELY CENTER AS MUCH ON QUESTION OF FULLNESS OF GON'S DISCLOSURE TO STORTING AS IT WILL ON ABSOLUTE COST OF PROGRAM AND WHAT IS OR IS NOT INCLUDED THERE IN. EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK INDICATE THAT THERE ARE MEMBERS OF BODY POLITIC WHO LOOKING TOWARDS 1977 ELECTIONS WOULD LIKE TO MAKE F-16 PURCHASE A DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE IN ORDER TO EMBARRASS LABOR GOVERNMENT WITH ANOTHER "STATFJORD AFFAIR" (GOVERNMENT WAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED IN NOVEMBER FOR FAILING TO WARN STORTING OF MAJOR INCREASE IN DEVELOPMENT COSTS OF STATFJORD OFFSHORE OIL FIELD).

6. CONTINUED GOOD PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND AN ACTIVE AND OPEN POLICY WITH THE PRESS WILL HELP PUT PROGRAM IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE FOR NORWEGIANS AND REDUCE POSSIBILITIES FOR SPILL OVER INTO OTHER DEFENSE PURCHASES-AWACS AND ROLAND.

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